



## Gatewood Reservoir

Gatewood Reservoir is nestled in the hills of southwestern Pulaski County in the Wythe Ranger District of the George Washington/Jefferson National Forest. The reservoir is a 162-acre water supply impoundment owned by the Town of Pulaski. Gatewood is a scenic lake, where you can still “get away from it all” for a day. It is an excellent spot to bring the family for a picnic or camping and fishing. Lake facilities include a campground, picnic areas, nature trails and wilderness camping.

Fish populations at Gatewood Reservoir are sampled each May by Department fish biologists using electrofishing. “Electrofishing” is a fish collection technique that uses a boat-mounted generator and voltage regulator to put an electric shock into the water. The shock affects fish that swim near the boat’s electric field. The electric field is limited to an area within a few feet around the boat. “Electroshocked” fish actually swim towards booms dangling off the front of the boat, where they are temporarily stunned and can be netted by biologists. Fish collected during electrofishing surveys are measured, weighed, and released back into the lake. Length information from collected fish gives biologists an indication of spawning success and whether there are good numbers of fish for anglers to catch. Weight information tells biologists whether these fish are in good condition. Time spent electrofishing is recorded so biologists can measure catch rates of each species and compare this information between years.

The main species collected by electrofishing at Gatewood Reservoir are largemouth bass and bluegill. Between 1996 and 2001, collections of these species indicate that reproduction is consistent from year to year. In addition, catch rates for both species have been stable over those years, indicating that these populations are not being overfished. Largemouth bass and bluegill weights at Gatewood Reservoir indicate they are in good condition.

Smallmouth bass, black crappie, and redear sunfish electrofishing collections have varied from year to year, depending on the time of the sample. However, collection of good numbers of these species in several samples during the past 6 years indicates that their populations are in good condition.

Bluegill and redear sunfish angling are the main attractions at this clear water lake. In electrofishing collections from 1999 to 2001, bluegill over 6 inches long averaged about 1/3 of a pound. In those same collections, redear sunfish over 7 inches long averaged close to 2/3 of a pound. Catching large sunfish at the lake is likely easiest during peak spawning time between mid-May and mid-June. When fishing at other times of the year, look for these sunfish in deeper water near woody debris in the lake. Because the lake is often very clear during spawning season, anglers may need to fish in early morning and late evening to avoid spooking these fish.

Fishing for largemouth bass is good. Anglers will find good numbers of 12 to 15 inch largemouth bass. Although biologists sampling the lake catch few bass over 15

inches, this is likely due to the clear water, which allows large bass to run away from their electrofishing boat. Some largemouth bass over five pounds are caught every year by anglers visiting the lake.

Smallmouth bass are also found in this cool water lake, providing the opportunity for anglers to catch occasional 2 to 3 pound fish. Black crappie can be caught around the numerous beaver lodges located on the lake. Channel catfish are stocked every other year, and an occasional 20 pounder is caught.

The only size limit on Gatewood Reservoir is a 12-inch minimum size limit for bass. Statewide daily creel limits are enforced as follows: 5 black bass, 25 crappie, 50 sunfish, and 20 catfish.

Gatewood is only open to boats from the first weekend in April to the last weekend in October. Boats are available for rent during those same months. *There is no ramp for trailer-launched boats, but boats that can be hand-launched are allowed.* Only electric motors are allowed on the lake. During the open season, Gatewood Reservoir is open for fishing 24 hours per day. Bank fishing is allowed year-round.

To get to the lake, travel west out of Pulaski on West Main Street, turn right on Magazine Street, then left on Mount Olivet Road. Go 2.3 miles on Mount Olivet Road to a hard-surfaced road to the right. Turn right on this road and go about 6 miles to the park entrance. For more information on this reservoir, call Gatewood Park at (540) 980-2561 or the Pulaski County Parks and Recreation Department office at (540) 994-8624.

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